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Engaging Citizens in Measuring and Reporting Community Conditions:
A Manager's Guide

Des Moines, Iowa

Boston, Massachusetts

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Indiana University–Purdue University Indianapolis

Managing for Performance and Results Series

IBM Center for
The Business
of Government

2007

MANAGING FOR PERFORMANCE AND RESULTS SERIES

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T A B L E   O F   C O N T E N T S

FOREWORD


Albert Morales


Richard Warrick

On behalf of the IBM Center for The Business of Government, we are pleased to present this report, "Engaging Citizens in Measuring and Reporting Community Conditions: A Manager's Guide," by Alfred T. Ho.

Two trends over the past decade are beginning to intersect. Public agencies at all levels of government increasingly have been reporting on their performance to the public. At the local level, this has increased from 21 percent a decade ago to about 70 percent today. In parallel, citizen and community groups have been collecting and reporting on the performance of their local government. The two trends are intended to increase both accountability and citizen involvement. However, they often are at odds; government agencies tend to measure their performance based on the outputs they produce, while citizen groups tend to measure their community's well-being based on the outcomes of social, economic, and environmental indicators in their communities.

Dr. Ho presents two case studies—one from Des Moines, Iowa; the other from Boston, Massachusetts—where these two trends converge. While each of these cases reflects different strategic approaches, they both attempt to bring together what government does and what citizens see as being important in their community. In his report, Dr. Ho examines "how government officials can engage the public more directly in performance measurement and reporting efforts and how they can communicate more effectively about the efforts and accomplishments of public policies and programs." The goal, he notes, is to "make performance measurement and reporting more relevant and meaningful to taxpayers."

This report builds on previous IBM Center studies that have examined performance management and citizens. In his report for the IBM Center, "E-Reporting: Strengthening Democratic Accountability," Mordecai Lee examined how technology could enhance government's public reporting in which public organizations communicate their performance to citizens. This report also builds on the Center's interest in citizen engagement. Carolyn Lukensmeyer and Lars Hasselblad Torres in their report for the IBM Center, "Public Deliberation: A Manager's Guide to Citizen

Engagement," examined the different ways in which government can increasingly engage citizens. Dr. Ho's report specifically addresses how citizens can become involved in measuring government performance.

This report contains valuable insights that can be extended to other local communities considering engaging citizens in performance measurement, as well as to the national level, where the Key National Indicators Initiative is beginning to attract increased attention.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For the past few decades, the exercise of performance measurement in government has gradually become more sophisticated, evolving from an accounting exercise that focused primarily on cost efficiency and control to a managerial system in which the use of performance data is integrated into strategic planning, program management, budgeting, and personnel management.

As the depth and breadth of performance measurement and management continues to grow, it is easy to lose sight of a fundamental premise of the tool: to provide information to citizens and their representatives and help them understand how the government has utilized taxpayers' resources, what the government has accomplished, and how effective and responsive it has been in doing its job. As the notion of "results-oriented" management becomes more popular in government today, questions like "Results for whom?" and "Who defines results and performance goals?" should be asked more often among public managers and policy makers.

The purpose of this report is to present specific guidelines to local public managers as well as nonprofit leaders on how they can work with each other and with citizen representatives to use public input to guide community conditions measurement and reporting. This report challenges the traditional notion of "performance management," in which public managers dictate what indicators should be used and how data should be analyzed and presented, and suggests that public engagement should play a larger role in the process.

Two models of public engagement are recommended in this report. The "partnership" model emphasizes equal sharing of power between citizen representatives and public officials in deciding what and how performance indicators should be used. This model is illustrated through a case study of the Des Moines "Citizen-Initiated Performance Assessment" project in 2001–2004, which was a partnership between the city government of Des Moines, Des Moines Neighbors, and several universities in the region. The second model, which is the "community indicators" model, gives even more power to the public by empowering and supporting nonprofit organizations in a community to measure the quality of life and policy outcomes through self-organized efforts and collaborative partnerships between government, nonprofit, and business organizations. This approach is illustrated through a case study of the Boston Indicators Project, which released its 2004–2006 report in June 2007, its fourth biennial report.

The two case studies show how local public officials can work effectively with citizen representatives and community leaders to define the critical issues in public policies and community conditions, develop specific indicators to measure progress, and engage elected officials and the public in using the data to guide policy making. From the Des Moines and Boston experiences, the report provides specific recommendations on the following aspects:

- How to prepare government and community leadership to engage the public in performance measurement and community conditions reporting before the project launch
- How to solicit public input and engage the general citizenry effectively in designing performance indicators

- How to report community conditions and program results effectively to citizens so that the content of the report, whether in paper or electronic media, is meaningful, understandable, accessible, credible, and compelling to citizens
- How to engage the public in follow-up after the release of a performance report so that the analysis can be used to empower policy makers, community leaders, and public managers to take responsive action

Data storage and processing technologies are continuing to develop rapidly; web-based technologies are becoming more accessible to the general public; and nonprofit leaders, citizens, and elected officials are becoming more aware of the power of information and demanding greater transparency and accountability in government. As a result, public managers in the 21st century will have to think beyond traditional bureaucratic boundaries in the exercise of performance measurement and engage community leaders and the public more aggressively in designing, using, and disseminating information about government performance and community conditions.

This thinking is evident not only in the recent development of government performance reporting and community indicators initiatives in the United States, but also in the Istanbul Declaration issued by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and various international organizations in June 2007, which encourages all countries to use statistical indicators to measure social, economic, and environmental outcomes and to hold government accountable for progress. Hence, citizen engagement and performance measurement of government programs must be more integrated in the future. As performance data becomes more democratized and widely used by citizens and nonprofit leaders, the governance structure that determines the design and usage of performance data should also be more open and democratized so that meaningful and informed civic dialogue about policy outcomes and responsive action can occur in communities globally.

Introduction

The purpose of this report is to investigate how government officials can engage the public more directly in performance measurement and reporting efforts and how they can communicate more effectively about the efforts and accomplishments of public policies and programs. It begins by examining the limitations of the traditional performance management paradigm and arguing that more citizen engagement is needed. It then examines two different models for implementing public engagement—the partnership model and the community indicators model—and uses two case studies from Des Moines and Boston, respectively, to illustrate how these two models can be executed. Based on the two case studies, the report highlights some of the key practices and strategies that local government and nonprofit managers need to pay attention to if they want to build a joint effort among citizens, community organizations, and the government in measuring and reporting policy results and community conditions.

For the past few decades, performance measurement has been a major theme of government reforms (Kelman, 2007). It is a management tool that emphasizes quantitative measurement of service efforts, output, and results so that policy makers and managers can make more informed decisions about how programs should be managed, how resources have been spent, and whether public investment in public programs should continue or be redirected (Hatry, 1999).

Initially, performance measures were designed mostly by accountants for control and anti-corruption purposes. When performance management was first advocated by government reformers in the early part of the 20th century, its primary purpose was to measure the cost and output of public services so that public managers as well as the public could hold agencies fiscally accountable (Ridley and Simon, 1938). However, since the 1960s, the scope of performance measurement has been gradually broadened. Instead of focusing solely on what was produced and provided to the public and how much money was spent on public services, government reformers began to emphasize the link between planning, budgeting, program management, and performance measurement. The Planning-Programming-Budgeting System (PPBS) that emerged in the late 1960s and the early 1970s was an example of this effort. PPBS was then followed by numerous reforms, such as zero-base budgeting in the late 1970s, management by objectives in the 1980s, the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) in the 1990s, and, most recently, the Program Assessment Rating Tool (PART), an initiative of the Bush administration (U.S. GAO, 1997; Breul and Moravitz, 2007).

Over time, the use of performance measurement has also become more sophisticated and widespread. Many government agencies have become familiar with the tool and have begun to develop better insights and accumulate greater experience in determining what data is important to their decision making as well as understanding how program efforts and results can be measured scientifically, reliably, and with high validity, and what data and methodologies can be used to achieve these goals (U.S. GAO, 2001). Performance reports have also become more detailed and elaborate. It is not surprising, then, that a performance budget today can easily contain hundreds of measures and be thicker than a phone book.

All these reform efforts in recent decades have been primarily driven by the perceived need of government

Acronyms and Abbreviations

CCRS	Citywide Citizen Response System
CIPA	Citizen-Initiated Performance Assessment
ComNET	Computerized Neighborhood Environment Tracking
FCNY	Fund for the City of New York
GASB	Governmental Accounting Standards Board
GPRA	Government Performance and Results Act
ICMA	International City/County Management Association
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PART	Program Assessment Rating Tool
PPBS	Planning-Programming-Budgeting System

agencies to better align policy goals, program objectives, performance targets, and actual performance results so that public resources could be put to the best use. The primary users of the performance measurement tool have been program managers and, to a certain extent, policy makers and legislators, who need performance information to carry out planning, budgeting, and program evaluation exercises (Melkers and Willoughby, 2001).

These efforts to increase the depth, breath, sophistication, and accuracy of performance measurement should be applauded. At the same time, the effort can also become so involved and complex that one of its original objectives—to hold government agencies accountable to the public—can be lost. The over-sophistication of public performance reporting should be a concern to government reformers, because in addition to the growing demand for a cost-efficient government, citizens want a more open, accountable, and responsive government. Increasingly, they are interested in knowing what the government has done in response to certain policy issues, how responsive government agencies are to citizens' requests, what results agencies have delivered, and how the lives of average citizens have been improved by government programs (Cohn 2005; Glaser and Denhardt, 2000).

Why Should Citizens Be Engaged in Government Performance and Community Conditions Reporting?

The Need to Continue to Rebuild Public Trust in Government

Many government officials today struggle to convey a positive image of government (Holzer et al., 2004). According to Bowler and Donovan (2003), only 33 percent of Americans in 2002 believed that public officials cared about what the public thought, a significant decline from 73 percent in 1960. Some also doubt the government to be fair and responsive to the needs of ordinary citizens, to spend money effectively and efficiently, and to resolve policy problems (Baldassare, 2000; Hibbing and Theiss-Morse, 2001 & 2002). Although public trust in government has rebounded in recent years compared with the trend in the 1980s, 57 percent of Americans still agreed that "when something is run by the government, it is usually inefficient and wasteful" (Pew Research Center, 2003).

Hence, public managers and policy makers need to take more aggressive efforts to explain to the public what the government has done, how it uses taxpayers' money to accomplish public good, and what results they have brought to benefit society (NAPA, 1999). As the Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) indicates, "when the government communicates desired performance information to its citizens, accountability is much stronger" (GASB, 2003, p. 28). Citizens need to have better information about the government and its policies if they are to hold it accountable for results, and they are more willing to pay taxes for services they view as worthwhile.

In addition, performance measurement and reporting may serve some practical interests of public managers. Government can do good for society (Goodsell, 2004), and citizens often have favorable views of government agencies if they have positive experiences with the agencies (Pew Research Center, 2000). The problem, however, is that many citizens seldom need to contact government agencies or even use their services consciously, even though they enjoy the benefits of those services. For example, many citizens may not need to call and use 9-1-1 services. Depending on socioeconomic and demographic background, some may never use public library services, public cultural and recreational facilities, or income-security programs for the unemployed. As a result, many citizens do not have firsthand experience in knowing the quality of public services and have to rely on media reports and their own subjective perception of the government to evaluate government performance.

This becomes a potential problem when the media lacks in-depth coverage of public affairs and public policy issues. Many have complained that, in recent years, news in the mass media tends to focus on catchy and negative incidents rather than in-depth, comprehensive reporting of public affairs (Slattery and Hakanen, 1994; Orren, 1997). As a result of "sensational journalism," the public is less likely to trust the media to get a balanced perspective on what government has done well and where it has failed (McDowell and Magill, 1984). Over time, repeated negativism in news reporting can erode public trust in government and lead to an erroneous belief that there is a systematic failure in all government programs. In the long run, this may create a vicious cycle that undermines the legitimacy of government as a social institution and reduces the public's willingness to pay for essential public services (Ebdon and Franklin, 2006; Glaser and Hildreth, 1999; Simonsen and Robbins, 2000).

Hence the question of how to communicate to the public about the government's performance and accomplishments effectively and objectively is very important. Unfortunately, many government reports today are poorly designed for public consumption; many budgetary reports or performance reports can be several inches thick, the content may not connect to issues that citizens care about, and the presentation often makes it difficult for ordinary citizens to locate what they want to know in the documents (Frisby, 1996). The content is also not presented in a user-friendly way and, as a result, sparks little interest in reading the document.

To fully utilize performance measurement as a tool of public accountability, government managers must think beyond the internal managerial issues and the traditional paradigm of performance management, and consider how the public can be more involved to make performance measurement and reporting more relevant and meaningful to taxpayers.

The Limitations of the Traditional Performance Management Paradigm

Although performance measurement has gained much support and attention among professional managers today, it is primarily an internal managerial effort and the public is seldom involved in the process. In this traditional paradigm, managers start by asking themselves what their program vision and objectives are. Once the vision and objective statements are developed, managers use them to develop specific performance measures and make sure that program activities and resource allocation are aligned with the strategic vision of the program.

This traditional approach certainly has many benefits. For example, it stimulates more strategic thinking about program design and execution as it requires managers to justify more rationally why their programs should exist and what goals they are trying to accomplish. Through performance measurement, managers also have a systematic tool to determine whether their goals have been accomplished, and by linking performance measurement to budgeting, managers may decide more rationally how resources should be allocated to accomplish their goals and program objectives.

However, the value of this traditional approach relies on several assumptions. First, it assumes that managers by themselves are willing to and capable of establishing program goals and objectives that are reflective of the public's concerns and priorities. This can be a challengeable assumption because without an effective public engagement process, managers may lack sufficient incentives to use performance measurement to hold themselves accountable for results that are important to the public.

Second, even if managers are sincerely interested in using performance measurement as a public accountability tool, they may easily be trapped by their own blind spots and fail to see beyond what they have been routinely doing in program delivery and planning. Also, the public and critics of the program may perceive performance measurement, no matter how sincerely and objectively it is done by managers, as a political tool to showcase the accomplishments of the administration, rather than as a managerial tool to try to measure the "true" performance of the agencies.

Third, the traditional approach assumes that rational, scientific management is sufficient to impact the policy-making process and that performance measures by themselves have enough political weight to influence how elected officials think about program effectiveness, policy impact, and resource allocation. Unfortunately, elected officials tend to respond more to the voiced concerns of voters and other stakeholders than to data (Ho, 2006b). Even if performance measurement produces highly scientific, reliable, and valid information to show if a program is effective or not, elected officials may not pay sufficient attention to the measures if they do not believe that the measures reflect their constituencies' concerns and priorities. They are also less likely to use the performance measures to communicate with their constituencies or to use them in policy deliberation. As a result, performance data may not have as significant an impact as managers may have hoped to see otherwise.

Fourth, in the traditional performance measurement and management approach, it is very easy for program managers to think about what they should do with their own programs, what resources they have within their organization, how their programs should be managed, and what results their programs should deliver, rather than how they might collaborate with other departments and the community to deliver programs more effectively and cost-efficiently. As a result, the traditional performance management paradigm tends to reinforce the departmental "silo" mentality, rather than the new paradigm of "network management" in public management and governance. To break this limited perspective, the exercise of performance measurement needs to bring in input from clients and stakeholders to help managers see beyond their program scope.

The Public Engagement Approach: Two Models

Public participation in government decision making is far from new in the history of U.S. public administration (Ebdon and Franklin, 2006; Kweit and Kweit, 1981). Many government programs today have citizen advisory committees in which citizen representatives provide officials with feedback on the operations and performance of programs and perhaps make recommendations to policy makers on how programs could be improved.

This is certainly a possible model to integrate citizen input. Many federal, state, and local programs today can easily adapt their existing public participatory mechanisms, such as citizen budget committees, citizen advisory boards, and special public hearings, to begin to ask their citizen representatives about how they should do performance measurement differently to reflect the public perspective more.

However, this traditional approach of citizen engagement can be very limiting. Citizens tend to play a passive role in setting the agenda. They also tend to follow the bureaucratic structure and thinking, such as organizing these committees by individual departments, rather than giving citizens a holistic view of government services and the overall picture of community conditions and policy impacts (Glaser, Aristigueta, and Payton, 2000).

Therefore, two alternative models are proposed here (see Table 1 on page 14). The first alternative is a partnership model in which public officials and citizen participants share decision-making power and act as equal partners in designing performance measures and reviewing performance information. Unlike the traditional performance management model in which government officials play a dominant role, the partnership model allows citizen participants to influence how meetings should be conducted, who should be included in the meeting, and what information should be presented to citizen participants. Also, government officials and citizen representatives jointly decide the scope of performance measurement activities, such as what programs should be evaluated and how they should be evaluated. They also share power in deciding how performance results should be reported to the elected officials and the public and what actions should be organized in response to the measurement results. Compared to the traditional venues of citizen participation, citizens in this model have much greater influence.

The second alternative is the community indicators model, in which community organizations and the general public independently measure the performance of government programs (see Table 2 on page 15). The government is merely one of the many participants in the performance measurement effort and does not dominate the agenda-setting and decision-making process. Government officials can play an important role by contributing to the meeting discussion and providing data and other information support. However, unlike their role in the previous model, government officials become participants among other stakeholders and experts.

There is no right or wrong in determining which model is appropriate for a particular community, agency, or program. Different circumstantial factors may favor one model over others. For example, when there is a highly politicized environment or historical tension between public officials and the general citizenry, the partnership model is probably not a viable option, and civic leaders may decide to pursue the community indicators model. For communities that do not have a strong network of non-

Table 1: Comparison of Different Models of Performance Measurement and Reporting

	The Traditional Performance Management Model	Public Engagement Approaches	
		The Partnership Model	The Community Indicators Model
Who is in charge	Professional public managers	Government officials and citizen representatives	Community/nonprofit leaders
Role of the public	Minimal, committee members at best	Co-decision-maker	Initiator, manager, agenda setter, and decision maker
Prerequisite conditions	Strong professional interest in performance measurement and management	Professional interest, openness to sharing power with citizen representatives, not a highly politicized environment	Professional interest, strong network among community organizations, public agencies, academic experts, and stakeholders
Continuity challenges	Depends on the professional interest of public managers	Depends on the political term and will of the elected officials and the tenure of managers	Depends on the nonprofit leadership, funding
Breadth of citizen participation	Limited	Depends on the negotiation between government officials and citizen representatives	Usually wide participation by community leaders, nonprofit organizations, academic experts, and public agencies
Resource requirements	Usually not a major concern	Significant time and resource commitment by government officials and citizens	Significant challenges
Impact on program management policy	Potential to enhance program efficiency and effectiveness	Great potential for direct impact on management policy making	Impact varies and depends on various circumstantial factors

profit organizations or a well-funded community foundation, the community indicators model is probably not easy to pursue, and the government may have to play a more active role in engaging citizens in performance measurement and be a major sponsor and organizer under the partnership model.

Each of the two models also has its benefits and challenges. Because of the direct involvement of government officials and their leadership role in the process, the partnership model is likely to impact government policies and program management more directly and easily. The community indicators model can have a significant impact on public policies, but may have to influence the policy-making process indirectly, such as through personal influence and networking with government officials, or lobbying, political campaigns, and media pressure to force government officials to pay attention to the performance information generated from the community indicators project.

The partnership model also has the advantage of getting resource and data support from the government. However, the continuity depends largely upon the political will of elected officials and the executive leadership. When there is a change in leadership that brings a different philosophy of governing, the government may easily abandon its public engagement or even the entire measurement effort. The community indicators model, on the other hand, has to rely heavily on private donations and philanthropic support. It also has to work with a network of nonprofit organizations, public agencies, or university communities to get necessary data and technical support. However, once these kinds of support have been secured, it is more able to withstand political changes and sustain itself over a long period of time. Also, since it is less vulnerable to the pressures of elections and budget cycles, it is more capable of taking a longer-term perspective measuring the progress of politically sensitive topics and fostering continuous community dialogue on government policy and performance issues.

Table 2: Sample of Community Indicators Projects That Show Strong Collaboration Between the Government and the Nonprofit Sector

Project	Website
In the United States	
Baltimore Neighborhood Indicators Alliance	www.bnia.org
Boston Indicators Project	www.bostonindicators.org
Community Indicators Initiative of Spokane County (Washington)	www.communityindicators.ewu.edu
Community Vision, Osceola County (Florida)	www.communityvision.org
Jacksonville Community Council, Inc.	www.jcci.org
Maine Marks	www.mainemarks.org
Metropolitan Philadelphia Indicators Project	http://claweb.temple.edu/mpip/
Oklahoma County Vital Signs	www.unitedwayokc.org/research_vs.html
Pittsburgh Today	www.pittsburghtoday.org
The State of Chattanooga Region Report	www.researchcouncil.org
Strategic Spartanburg (South Carolina)	www.strategicspartanburg.com
Sustainable Seattle	www.sustainableseattle.org
Truckee Meadows Tomorrow (Nevada)	www.quality-of-life.org
Worcester Regional Research Bureau's Benchmarking Reports	www.wrrb.org
Outside the United States	
Community Indicators Victoria (Australia)	www.communityindicators.net.au/
London Sustainable Development Commission's Quality of Life Indicators Project	www.london.gov.uk/mayor/ sustainable-development/susdevcomm_ indicators.jsp
Quality of Life Measurement, City of Winnipeg (Canada)	www.winnipeg.ca/services/government/ planwinnipeg/rev
Sustainable Community Indicators Program (Canada)	www.ec.gc.ca/soer-ree/English/scip/

The Benefits of Engaging the Public in Government Performance and Community Conditions Reporting

In comparison with the traditional performance management approach, both of the public engagement models have the benefit of putting government officials more directly in touch with their "boss" as well as their service users. As a result, they allow greater transparency and accountability in examining the performance issues of government programs. They also provide opportunities for the public to provide direct input to the performance enhancement efforts of public managers.

Furthermore, public engagement may help managers address some of the "bottom-line" concerns, such as cost cutting and program priority setting. For example, public involvement can refine the public communication strategies of government. Public officials may still collect their own data on program input, output, effectiveness, and cost-efficiency for internal managerial purposes. However, by getting public input, public officials can more effectively differentiate what information should be kept in-house for internal consumption, and what information should be disseminated publicly. This not only helps the government communicate more effectively to the citizens, but also reduces the cost of communication and reporting by streamlining the content of public reports.

Second, from a political perspective, public managers need citizens to legitimize their decisions (Mathews, 1999). If citizen representatives are included in the performance measurement process and have a fair opportunity to present their views and perspectives, they may become public advocates for the government programs and budgetary decisions (Yang and Holzer, 2006). Also, performance measures developed with citizen input are more likely to gain political weight in the eyes of elected officials and the media. As a result, the information is more likely to impact elected officials' decisions in strategic planning, staff evaluation, resource allocation, and internal communication and interdepartmental management (Ho, 2006a).

Finally, public engagement in performance measurement provides a new platform for innovative ideas. The government can use it to tap into a wide array of talent and expertise from within the community. In a citizen committee or through meetings with citizens, public officials can present the challenges they face in delivering certain services. Citizens from different walks of life can then share their opinions and suggestions and recommend innovative solutions to the problems. For example, they may let the government know about some new technological development used in the business sector that public officials have never considered adopting. Or they may suggest different ways to respond to citizens' complaints and service requests that can be more cost-effective than existing systems. Citizens with different socioeconomic and demographic backgrounds may also have a fresh perspective on a policy question or a management concern that government officials may otherwise overlook.

So getting the public involved in discussing performance measurement and the reporting of government services is a necessary and important step in democratic governance. Not many public officials and citizens are likely to dispute this claim. However, the challenge is how to do it effectively. In the following sections, two case studies are used to demonstrate how the partnership and community indicators models can be implemented in a local community.

A Case Study of the Partnership Model: The Des Moines Citizen-Initiated Performance Assessment Project

Background of the Project

The City of Des Moines, Iowa, has a population of about 200,000 within a metropolitan area of about 450,000 people. The city is located almost in the middle of the state of Iowa. In addition to being the capital city and the political center of the state, it is the home of many insurance companies, including Principal Financial Group and Nationwide Insurance, and several other prominent businesses, such as Pioneer Hi-Bred International, Wells Fargo Home Mortgage, and Meredith Publishing Corporation.

The city government has a professional manager, about 2,000 employees, and a seven-member city council. It is responsible for a wide range of services, including police and fire protection, sanitation services, parks and recreation, infrastructure maintenance and construction, traffic control and parking, an airport, housing, community development and social services, economic development initiatives, and libraries. The annual budget of the city is about $300 million.

Between 2001 and 2004, the City of Des Moines implemented a program known as the "Citizen-Initiated Performance Assessment" (CIPA) project, in which public officials and neighborhood representatives jointly developed performance measures and used them to examine community development issues. The project was part of a nine-city experiment that was funded by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation from 2001 to 2004. More information about the project can be found at www.iowacipa.org.

Before the launch of the CIPA project in 2001, city officials in Des Moines were already interested in performance measurement, but they used it primarily as an internal management tool. The city also joined the comparative performance measurement project operated by the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) to benchmark itself against similar cities' performance.

City management was interested in launching a citizen-initiated performance assessment project primarily because they wanted to understand how citizens understood and perceived performance. While the city had been collecting a lot of performance measures through its internal management initiatives and the ICMA program, city staff wanted to make sure that they also had performance measures that mattered to citizens so that they could report to and communicate with the general public more effectively. As then–City Manager Eric Anderson remarked, "Are we measuring the right thing?" was the key question that motivated the city staff's interest in the project.

Also, like many other cities in the nation, Des Moines needed to battle the challenges of urban sprawl into different suburbs in the metropolitan area, of degrading infrastructure, and of revitalization of its downtown and many old neighborhoods to retain and attract residents. Hence, how residents perceived the quality of life in their neighborhoods and how satisfied they were with different public services were some of the top concerns of Des Moines officials. City management was very supportive of the project, hoping that it would give them a fresh look at government performance from the citizens' perspective.

Working with Citizens to Develop and Report Performance Measures and Community Conditions Indicators

To get citizens involved in performance measurement, the city chose to partner with Des Moines Neighbors, an umbrella organization for the 51 neighborhood associations in the city. The organization is very active in local politics and plays an important role in neighborhood issue advocacy before the city council, the training of local leaders and volunteers, and the coordination of grassroots campaigns and neighborhood events. The City of Des Moines had also worked with Des Moines Neighbors closely on several previous projects, such as a neighborhood revitalization program and various community development projects. Given the long working relationship and the political significance of Des Moines Neighbors, the partnership was a natural development.

In 2001, the city council of Des Moines officially passed a city resolution to launch the CIPA program. With the blessing of the elected officials, city officials and neighborhood representatives began to meet to discuss how they should measure the performance of the city. A core working group, known as the "citizen performance team," was formed that included 10 to 12 representatives from Des Moines Neighbors, one representative from the city manager's office, and one city council member. Occasionally, the city manager himself also attended some of the meetings and participated in some of the key discussions with neighborhood representatives.

Once the performance team was formed, the CIPA process went through several stages:

Stage 1: Topic Selection

In the first round of meetings, the performance team had to come to a consensus about what they wanted to measure. Many topics had been proposed, including the use of tax incentives, economic development and job creation programs, and public safety. After several rounds of discussion, it was clear that participants were not interested in measuring the performance of abstract policy issues, such as the efficiency of government spending in general or the effectiveness of tax incentives, or technical issues, such as the cost-efficiency of different departments.

Photo courtesy of the Iowa CIPA Project

Community meetings in Des Moines facilitated by a staff person from Iowa State University.

Rather, they wanted to measure the quality of life in the city and what the city had done to improve the well-being of residents. They also wanted to focus on neighborhood issues that they could experience, perceive, and understand directly, rather than issues remote from their daily life.

To help the performance team gain more insight into citizen priorities and primary concerns, a town hall meeting was conducted in January 2002 in which about 100 neighborhood leaders and community organizational representatives participated and discussed in small groups about various neighborhood and community concerns. Researchers and students from Iowa State University and the University of Iowa provided technical assistance and facilitated some of the discussion to help clarify and focus the opinions expressed in the meeting.

Since many possible community topics were raised in the town hall meeting, the performance team decided to conduct a small-scale survey of neighborhood leaders to help them further narrow their focus. A survey was developed by researchers at Iowa State University and distributed to the leadership of the neighborhood associations. The survey asked the respondents to rate their satisfaction on different community issues, including clearance of debris and abandoned vehicles, provision and maintenance of public housing, building code enforcement, street lighting, maintenance of sidewalks, snow removal, provision of neighborhood parks and recreation facilities, public safety, and emergency response. More than 300 responses were received and analyzed by the university research team.

After the survey results were presented to the performance team, they spent a few meetings discussing the results and finally came to a consensus that the following issues were the primary concerns for neighborhood leaders in Des Moines: drug control, odor control, crow control, noise pollution control, mosquito control, weed control, control of illegal dumping, traffic law enforcement, clearance of abandoned housing, clearance of junky yards, and teen loitering. The performance team later labeled these concerns as "nuisance control" issues.

Stage 2: Indicator Selection

Once the team selected nuisance control as the topic, the performance team discussed why these nuisance issues emerged in certain neighborhoods and what the city government and residents needed to do to address the concerns. Out of the discussion, the critical issues of each policy topic came out naturally, and the performance team used them to develop performance measures (see Table 3). For example, in discussing odor control, the performance team members were very interested in knowing where the problems had been, how well the city had responded to complaints and service requests, and whether the problems were resolved and the residents were satisfied with the current air quality in their neighborhood. In discussing illegal dumping, such as abandoned furniture and other nuisance items, the performance team members again were very interested in measuring where the problems had been and how quickly the city had responded to resolve the problems.

Citizen representatives generally did not have any problem discussing the critical issues of a policy area or the expected policy results. However, they sometimes had difficulty translating the critical issues into quantifiable performance measures. For example, some of their original suggestions of performance measures were vaguely defined, some did not provide a strong, valid link to the critical elements that the team really wanted to measure, and some might have been too costly or posed technical problems for collecting reliable data. Hence, in the process of developing performance measures, technical assistance from university researchers and facilitated discussion by neutral experts were important and helpful to move the process along.

Stage 3: Data Collection

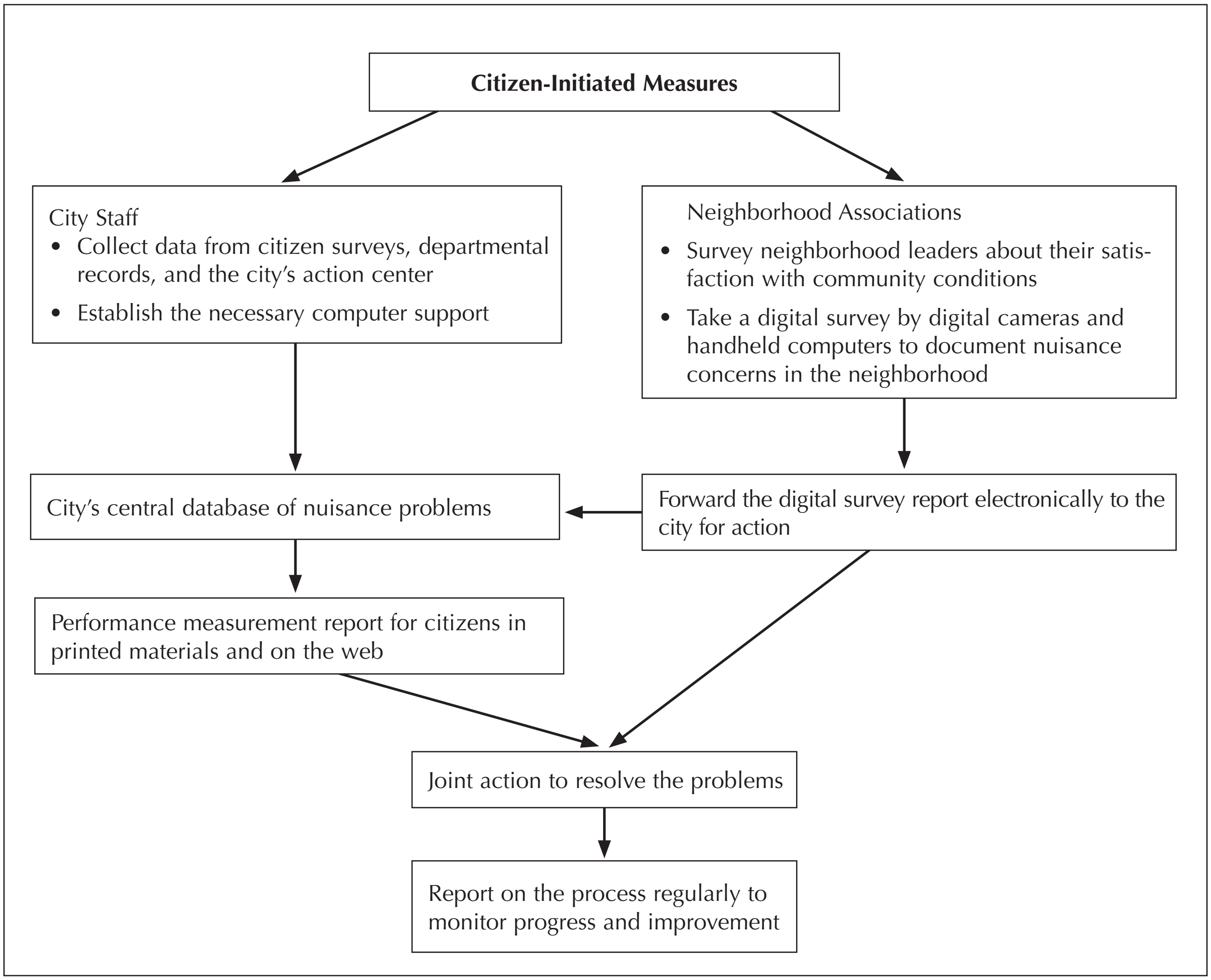
After the measures were finalized, city officials began the data collection process (see Figure 1 on page 20). Since the City of Des Moines had a service request response system known as the Citywide Citizen Response System (CCRS), it could track the number of nuisance complaints over time and by location. It could also track when the complaints were received, when the initial reaction by the city government took place, and when the case was resolved. This system became a major data source for many of the performance measures requested by the performance team.

In addition, the city contracted out to researchers at Iowa State University to conduct sample surveys about residents' satisfaction with various city services

Table 3: Linking Critical Issues

Topic	Critical Issues	Performance Measures
Odor Control	"Where are the problems?"	Number of complaints received—by neighborhood
	"Are citizens satisfied with the air quality and the current level of odor control?"	Satisfaction level of surveyed residents—by neighborhood
	Satisfaction of city response after a complaint is filed	Level of satisfaction with the services received after a complaint or hotline call was made a month before
Control of Illegal Dumping	"Where are the problems?"	Number of complaints received—by neighborhood
	Timeliness of city response	Average time taken to make the first response, and to resolve the problem, after a complaint or hotline call was received—by neighborhood Percentage of cases followed by departmental actions within X number of hours
	Overall satisfaction with the level of current dumping control	Regular satisfaction tracking of neighborhood leaders—by neighborhood

Figure 1: Des Moines' Neighborhood Digital Surveys



and their perception of the quality of life in their residence areas. Small-scale surveys of neighborhood organization leaders were also conducted to measure their satisfaction with neighborhood conditions and to solicit suggestions for improvement.

Citizens also participated in part of the data collection process. In 2002 and 2003, Des Moines Neighbors worked with the Fund for the City of New York (FCNY) and the city government of Des Moines to organize digital surveys in selected neighborhoods. In these surveys, citizens used handheld electronic devices to document problems in the condition of the physical infrastructure such as potholes, broken sidewalks, and damaged retaining walls. They also used the devices to report nuisance problems such as graffiti, illegal dumping, abandoned housing, and odor problems. The program was modeled after the Computerized Neighborhood Environment Tracking (ComNET) system developed by FCNY, which uses handheld computers to produce digital records and pictures of troublesome street and neighborhood conditions. However, the City of Des Moines enhanced the system further by working with FCNY to develop a data upload system so that all the records from the digital surveys were integrated into the city's complaint database system, which generated work orders and incidence track history so that representatives of Des Moines Neighbors and city officials could monitor follow-up actions upon the receipt of the records.

Stage 4: Engagement of Citizens and Other Stakeholders in Reporting

To ensure that the CIPA process was worth their effort and time investment, the performance team and Des Moines Neighbors realized that they had to engage the city council, because, ultimately, the city

Photo courtesy of the Iowa CIPA Project

Citizens of Des Moines working on a community digital survey in the CIPA project.

council was responsible for making policy and budgetary decisions and telling city departments what they should do to improve community conditions. Hence, when the performance measurement reports were ready, citizen representatives from the performance team and Des Moines Neighbors made a special presentation to the city council and urged them to look into the different policy issues reflected in the report.

In addition, when Des Moines Neighbors conducted the digital surveys in selected neighborhoods, they invited local newspaper and TV reporters to come and observe the process and make a special report on some of the problems found. Although media reports like these were incidental and insufficient to generate sustained policy action, they certainly helped raise the attention of elected officials and some citizens about some of the neighborhood concerns.

The city management has also made a special effort to engage the larger public in disseminating performance measurement results. Since 2004, the City of Des Moines has been issuing a public performance report. Unlike many government reports, which are usually thick, data-intensive, and poor in graphic design, the Des Moines performance reports are only about 40 pages long, focusing on many quality-of-life issues that the performance team had expressed interest in and giving only highlights of the city's efforts and accomplishments in these areas. To ensure the report is easily accessible by the general public, hard copies are available not only at the city hall, but also in local libraries and major grocery stores. In addition, the report is downloadable on the city's website (www.ci.des-moines.ia.us/performancereport.htm).

The Benefits and Limitations of the Partnership Model: Lessons from the Des Moines Experience

The Des Moines CIPA project offers an interesting case study of the partnership model of public involvement in performance measurement and reporting. Through the project, the citizen performance team showed Des Moines officials what areas of public services they were most concerned about and what performance measures were understandable and most meaningful to them. As a result, government officials could prioritize their focus and resources more effectively in the exercise of performance measurement. Since data collection, analysis, and reporting can be very time-consuming and expensive, and many government agencies are already fiscally stressed, a more focused strategy can be very helpful.

In addition, partnering with citizens gives performance measurement the necessary political weight in the policy-making and budgetary process. A concern or request made by a citizen based on the performance data is more likely to get elected officials' attention than the same request made by a departmental official. Similarly, it is easier for the city leadership to convince department staff and their subordinates to change the way they manage or deliver services if the request comes from citizens' requests or is grounded in citizen-initiated performance measures rather than from the city manager or the mayor alone.

However, the partnership model, such as the one used by Des Moines, also has limitations. First, it can only work if government leaders are risk-takers and are willing to work with citizen groups openly and collaboratively. Second, it requires the same level of leadership, commitment, and trust among civic leaders and citizens to work with government officials. An absence of either factor can easily jeopardize the prospect of a partnership.

In the case of Des Moines, the president of Des Moines Neighbors decided to step down after two terms of office. Then, in 2005, the city manager, Eric Anderson, who was a co-initiator of the CIPA project, also left. With the loss of two key supporters in a short period of time and the challenges of leadership transition in both the city government and Des Moines Neighbors, the project began to lose momentum after 2005.

Currently, the leadership of Des Moines Neighbors does not have any plans to restart the civic engagement process to look into the performance measures of city services. Because of the loss of its citizen partner, the city government of Des Moines has not been able to relaunch the CIPA process, but it has continued to issue an annual public report of city performance using some of the performance measures suggested in the CIPA process.

The Des Moines experience shows how fragile a partnership can be despite the potential benefits to a community. Without strong and committed support from both the governmental and community leaders, a project like the Des Moines CIPA may not be able to sustain itself easily. That is why alternative models of citizen-government partnership like the community indicators model discussed next should also be explored.

A Case Study of the Community Indicators Model: The Boston Indicators Project

Background of the Project

The Boston Indicators Project was originally created by a partnership between the City of Boston and the Boston Foundation, which is similar to the partnership model adopted in the CIPA project in Des Moines. In 1996, Boston's then-Environmental Services Chief Cathleen Douglas Stone proposed to a staff member, Geeta Pradhan, director of the Sustainable Boston Initiative, the launch of a project to measure the sustainability of the city's growth and development. Following some internal resistance among city departments to sharing data and developing measures of accountability, Pradhan decided to bring in an external partner. Since the Boston Community Building Network at the Boston Foundation, directed by Charlotte Kahn, had developed the Boston Children and Families Database to make available comprehensive data and had a long history of working with community groups, the city decided to form a partnership with the foundation to pursue the measurement project.

Steps to conceptualize the Boston Indicators Project began to take place in early 1997. A series of meetings were held to solicit input, beginning with community-based groups and public agencies already engaged in measurement efforts, including the Community Development Corporation, the Boston Police Department, and the Budget Office. This eventually evolved to include more than 300 community leaders, academics, policy makers, and leaders across different sectors who came together over the course of several years, in large and small groups, to develop the comprehensive framework of measurement used by the Boston Indicators Project. The project was also a founding participant of the National Neighborhood Indicators Project at the Urban Institute and was able to learn from other cities involved.

As a result of the community deliberation process, indicators for 10 sectors were developed: civic health, cultural life and the arts, the economy, education, the environment, housing, public safety, public health, technology, and transportation. Following the release of a draft in 1999 for review and comment, the first report, "The Wisdom of Our Choices: Boston's Indicators of Progress, Change and Sustainability," was published in 2000. At that time, the management of the project shifted to the Boston Foundation, and the Metropolitan Area Planning Council also joined as a core third partner.

Since 2000, the Boston Indicators Project has released the indicator reports every two years and the Boston Foundation has committed to do so until 2030. The relationship between the city and the Boston Foundation has also evolved. Instead of being the co-leader of the project, the City of Boston has gradually let the Boston Foundation assume the leadership role, call all the meetings, and be responsible for most of the data analysis and dissemination effort. The city still supports the project through the participation of officials as participants in the discourse process, as co-chairs of subcommittees and working groups, as data providers, and as public speakers and panelists. However, the city is no longer an active partner in determining what performance measures should be reported and how they should be reported. Hence, over time, the Boston Indicators Project has evolved from the partnership model to a fully citizen-driven community indicators effort.

Working with the Community to Develop and Report Performance Measures and Community Conditions Indicators

From the very beginning, the Boston Indicators Project adopted a highly open process in order to solicit public input in developing and using the indicators. In early 1997, a core group composed of representatives from the Boston Foundation, several other nonprofit and environmental organizations, and analysts of the Boston Redevelopment Authority and city development agencies gathered at the Boston Foundation to review traditional performance measurement practices that had existed for decades. After a series of meetings, this core group came to a consensus that they needed to open up the process to allow for more cross-sectoral and grassroots involvement in developing the framework of indicators so that the data would be more meaningful and relevant to the local users and the community.

This process laid the foundation for the participatory approach used subsequently by the Boston Indicators Project. Since 1997, the participants of the project have gone through the following discussion steps:

Stage 1: Definition of the Topics

In late 1997, about 75 representatives of city departments, the public schools, and community organizations and academics from various institutions in Boston discussed the goals and vision of the Boston Indicators Project. They also developed a process in which representatives from different organizations and walks of life were randomly assigned to small groups, irrespective of their professional expertise, to discuss their shared values, priorities, and concerns as residents of Boston.

The number of participants gradually expanded over time as the Boston Foundation and the city government recognized that more community representatives and organization leaders should be present to cover the various topics identified. As a result, by early 1998, about 150 representatives were participating in the discussion process, which led to the creation of the 10 sectors mentioned earlier. These sectors became the measurement framework that has been used in the indicator report since 2000.

Stage 2: Core Indicator Selection

After the sectors were selected in early 1998, general large-group discussions were used to discuss a vision statement for each of the sectors followed by small-group discussions to hone the language. The next stage focused on developing and selecting specific indicators for each topic. Subcommittees were formed to draw on participants' expertise in particular areas. Student interns from local universities also helped the staff of the Boston Foundation to organize the process and capture the results of these meetings.

The discussion process on indicator selection lasted for more than six months. In this process, a steering group was formed to develop criteria for selecting performance measures, such as relevance, meaning, and comprehensibility of the measures to the Boston community. The group decided to adopt a positive tone for the project. Rather than trying to focus and report on deficiencies, such as high school dropout rates and unemployment, they steered the discussion to encourage the participants to think about how to build the human, technological, social, and physical infrastructure assets of Boston and to identify what community goals they would like to achieve for each sector in the future. Even when deficiency measures are used, such as infant mortality rates, the organizer tried to encourage participants to think about future possibilities and performance goals, such as a policy goal of "healthy children."

Originally, a "wish list" of more than 1,500 performance measures was suggested through discussion and meetings. This created several problems. First, the vast number of measures would create a huge burden for data collection. Second, some of the measures brainstormed by participants were not easily measurable. Data might not be reliable and consistently available over time, and some of the measures could be potentially misunderstood and misinterpreted by users. Other technical concerns were also raised, such as data confidentiality and implications for individual privacy in some of the suggested measures.

To clarify and resolve these problems, both expert subcommittees and large-group discussion were used. Expert advice and studies of other indicator projects across the nation were also sought to find ways to refine the project's focus. Finally, after a

Photo courtesy of the Boston Indicators Project

A sectoral meeting in 2006.

series of meetings and discussion, the Boston Indicators Project adopted a much simpler framework by selecting only seven to 10 core "indicator goals" in each of the 10 sectors, with one to three "indicator measures" associated with each goal that are methodologically sound, reliable, and consistent over time as well as relevant and effective in measuring the well-being of Greater Boston. This set of indicators was first released in a draft report in 1999 for review and comments. Then they became the core indicators that have been reported since 2000 to track the development of Boston, with occasional corrections and refinements along the way.

Stage 3: Civic Agenda and Data Collection

The Boston Foundation itself does not have a lot of internal capacity to collect and analyze the data needed for the report. Therefore, from the very beginning of the project, it has emphasized the need to work with different partners such as the City of Boston and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, universities in the region, and various research institutes and community organizations, to gather data for the report.

Engaging other partners in the data collection effort also contributes to a continuous, dynamic civic discourse that brings the most updated research and information to the Indicators Project. While the core topics and performance measures have remained largely consistent since the 2000 report, the Boston Foundation frames its key findings through a review of statistical research as well as through qualitative perspectives about the 10 sectors through "sector convenings."

These sectoral meetings are organized according to the 10 topics of the Indicators Project and are conducted biennially before the release of a new Indicators Report. The Boston Indicators Project at the foundation is responsible for inviting the participants to these meetings.

Invitees usually come from very diverse backgrounds: Most are community organization and neighborhood representatives, ethnic group leaders, officials from different levels and units of government, and university researchers. Each meeting has two co-chairs who are usually respected community leaders or government officials familiar with the topic. Sometimes subcommittees are needed to divide up a complex topic such as education to allow participants to drill down into more detailed discussion of subtopics.

Each sector meeting lasts for about three hours. In each meeting, staff first present the mission and goals of the Indicators Project and give an overview of the Indicators Project website. Then participants—ranging from 20 to more than 100 for complex sectors—are asked to participate in a highly structured agenda, beginning with an assessment of the long-term trends, major accomplishments, developments, and innovations within the past two-year period, and an examination of the remaining challenges faced by the particular policy sector. In addition, they are asked to discuss how they see their sector being related to other sectors and what should be done to facilitate more inter-sectoral problem solving. After each meeting, the results are summarized by the Boston Foundation staff, reviewed by the co-chairs of the sectoral committee and subcommittees, and distributed to participants.

The results of these sectoral meetings are the foundation for continuous qualitative updates for the Indicators Project to augment its updated statistical measures. The meetings also serve as a major "social intelligence sharing and gathering" event for many nonprofit organizations and public agencies in Boston at which leaders can learn from each other about the latest developments and innovations in a particular sector. Many also use the opportunity to network with others who share similar interests and service missions.

Stage 4: Data Dissemination

The public is also engaged in the data dissemination stage. For example, in June 1999, when the Boston Foundation released a draft of the first Indicators Report, it made a special presentation at a Boston College Citizen Seminar, a venerable venue for civic discourse. Community leaders, neighborhood representatives, and the media were present, and Mayor Thomas Menino gave a keynote address to indicate the significance of the report for the sustainable progress of the city. About 1,000 copies of the draft report were also disseminated among policy makers and legislators, government officials, and community organizations for review and comment. Their comments and suggestions were incorporated in the final report, which was also released at a major Boston College Citizen Seminar, in 2000.

Since the 2000 report, the Boston Foundation has been releasing the Indicators Report biennially at the Boston College Citizen Seminar with about 350 participants from the community, public agencies, and the business sector. Each time, the release is accompanied by a variety of publicity strategies, including press releases and special presentations to key constituencies, to draw the attention of the public and the media to the themes and major issues raised in the report.

Stage 5: Engagement of Major Stakeholders Beyond Reporting

Release of the report, however, is not the end of the Boston Indicators Project. In fact, as Mary Jo Meisner, vice president for communications, community relations, and public affairs at the Boston Foundation, suggests, that is just the beginning and creates a platform to engage the larger public to think about and act on the issues raised in the Indicators Report. For example, the Boston Foundation itself has launched several initiatives since the 2000 report:

"Understanding Boston"

After the release of the 2000 report, the Boston Foundation realized that it had to engage the public and civic leadership more to get them to pay attention to the issues raised in the reports. Hence, in 2002, the Foundation launched the "Understanding Boston" campaign, which included the following efforts:

- Making more aggressive efforts to publish the key results from the Indicators Project, such as a summary report for wider circulation
- Convening meetings and forums at the Boston Foundation to discuss report results and findings of related research commissioned by the Boston Foundation
- Creating task forces to generate recommendations for the issues or concerns raised
- Working with other community organizations, civic and business leaders, and public officials to foster policy changes by the state legislature or the city government

Bringing the Report and Data to the World Wide Web

After the release of the 2000 report, the Boston Foundation also realized that it should not rely solely on printed materials to publicize the information in the report. With the growing use of the Internet and the ability of the World Wide Web to provide more dynamic and interactive content, the Boston Foundation decided to develop a specific website (www.bostonindicators.org) to publish the content of the reports electronically (see Figure 2).

Since its launch, the website has become a major informational hub for governmental, community, and nonprofit organizations in Greater Boston. The website has a specific section called "Geography-at-a-Glance," which provides demographic and housing information on the city and neighborhoods of Boston and the metropolitan region. The website also contains a data mapping tool known as "MetroBoston DataCommon," developed in partnership with the Boston Metropolitan Area Planning Council, to provide in-depth data for 101 cities in Eastern Massachusetts (see Figure 3 on page 28).

On the Boston Indicators Project website, users can select any of the 10 sectors and look at the highlights of certain data trends, review changes in the measures or indicators for that topic, download the relevant data, and access different research reports by universities and research organizations on the

Figure 2: The Homepage of the 2006 Boston Indicators Project

Source: *http://www.bostonindicators.org/IndicatorsProject.*

selected topic. Because of the breadth and depth of the community issues covered by the website and its success in disseminating data for public usage, the Indicators Project was a winner of an International Tech Museum Award for technological innovations that further equality in 2003.

The Civic Agenda

In 2004, the Boston Indicators Project drew on the results of the sectoral meetings and related research to develop "An Emerging Civic Agenda," which focused on four broad goals:

- **Creation of a dynamic and open civic culture** that embraces inclusive, collaborative, and strategic civic leadership and structures
- **Development of world-class human resources** through access to excellent pre-K–16 education and lifelong learning and healthy lifestyles to support a dynamic workforce, a high quality of life, and a shared sense of belonging, safety, and well-being
- **Creation of more high-pay and highly value-added jobs** by building on the region's innovative economy and other core community strengths
- **21st century infrastructure** to support vibrant and healthy communities throughout MetroBoston, with high-quality housing choices across a range of prices that meet the affordability requirements of all residents

The purpose of developing these four broad goals is to construct a policy and action agenda and to challenge policy makers and community leaders to think beyond their specialized areas and organizational boundaries to come up with collaborative strategies and inter-sectoral partnerships to improve the well-being of Greater Boston.

Within this Emerging Civic Agenda, the Boston Foundation identifies its own roles and strategies as follows:

- The provision of sound analysis and research to create common ground and shared understanding

Figure 3: The Homepage of MetroBoston DataCommon

Source: *http://www.bostonindicators.org/IndicatorsProject.*

through the Boston Indicators Project, grant making, and other activities

- The creation of opportunities for communities to discuss the challenges and goals
- The fostering of consensus among policy makers and major stakeholders to align short-term and long-term goals and strategies
- The fostering of community action to leverage assets and achieve impact through collaborative strategies, partnerships, and alliances; public-private initiatives; and personal commitments

Several venues have been used to pursue these strategies. In addition to convening sectoral meetings, making special presentations to community and business organizations, and launching the Boston Indicators website, the Boston Indicators Project has partnered with local universities, the Metropolitan Area Planning Council, and various nonprofit organizations to offer training to local nonprofits and community activists on how to use the data to conduct analysis and develop community action plans or grant strategies.

The Boston Indicators Project at the Boston Foundation has also created two specific venues. The John LaWare Leadership Forum builds on the findings of the Boston Indicators Report and other sources of trend data to convene civic and business leaders. The forum is a joint effort among the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston, Sovereign Bank, and the Boston Foundation and is co-sponsored by a number of business and civic organizations. It aims to engage leaders across the region to think about the implications of trend data, identify important initiatives under way, highlight best practices, and fill gaps in local efforts.

The "What's Next? Seminars" are special topic seminars that build upon the results of the Indicators Project to engage policy makers and community leaders, especially the younger generation, to think collaboratively about future challenges and opportunities for MetroBoston. The goal is to create and foster a diverse and intergenerational network of leaders to examine the results of the Indicators Project, discuss the four themes of the "Civic Agenda," and assist in fostering an informed consensus on community action to address identified challenges. The first seminar was conducted in April 2004 and discussed the quality of leadership and vision for Boston in 2015. Since then, a series of seminars have been conducted to explore intergenerational and inter-sectoral leadership issues that are important to the future socioeconomic development of Greater Boston.

While the "What's Next? Seminars" tend to engage mostly the younger leadership of community and nonprofits organizations, the John LaWare Leadership Forum focuses more heavily on business and civic leadership. The forum usually features high-profile speakers on selected topics, such as the economic challenges and opportunities faced by Boston, or on various social policy challenges and solutions, and uses the presentations to foster discussion among the attending business and civic leaders about the selected issues. The forum also serves as a platform to challenge business and civic leaders to get more involved in community issues and to encourage them to engage in more collaboration and partnerships to push forward a shared civic agenda.

The Boston Indicators Project as a Forum for Informed Civic Discourse

Although the Boston Indicators Project began as a measurement project focused on sustainability issues, it has gradually evolved to become a broad-based community engagement effort that focuses on two tracks:

1. A consistent, long-term effort to track change in Greater Boston across 10 sectors through about 70 indicators and 150 measures
2. A civic agenda that focuses civic, community, business, and government leadership and inter-sectoral collaborations on key trends, challenges, and opportunities, and tracks progress on shared civic goals

These two tracks are inseparable and intertwined. The data creates the foundation for informed community dialogue on various issues and policy challenges. At the same time, the data needs to track with the civic agenda activities to bring out the "human face" of the data and to tell interesting stories behind the data trends that can capture the attention of the general public and the media more easily. Also, civic engagement pulls together a broad cross-section of expertise and resources in a community and fosters more inter-organizational and inter-sectoral collaboration in the data analysis and collection effort. As a result, as Charlotte Kahn, the director of the Boston Indicators Project, remarks, "What comes out of the Boston Indicators Project is more informed civic discourse." That is the goal of the Boston Indicators Project—to foster informed public discourse, in addition to democratizing data and tracking progress on shared civic goals. The intentional and successful combination of both tracks by the Indicators Project has created a healthy cycle of data updates and community action that are mutually sustaining over time.

In June 2007, the Boston Foundation released its latest indicator report, "A Time Like No Other," at the Boston College Citizen Seminar, which was also co-sponsored by the John LaWare Leadership Forum and Boston College's Chief Executives' Club. Boston Mayor Thomas M. Menino gave the keynote speech and various speakers highlighted some of the key findings in the report. Some of the findings were good news for Boston, such as the successful economic rebound in 2004–2006, the leadership of Massachusetts in research and development and high-tech industries, and the emerging civic networks and new spirit of collaboration in the Boston metropolitan area. However, the report also raises a series of concerns, including rising global competition, rapidly rising healthcare costs and lack of investment in preventive measures, widening income inequality, a potential labor shortage, the energy dependence of the region, and the need for "green innovation." In the next two years, the Boston Foundation plans to build upon these findings and create various community forums for policy makers, government managers, community leaders, and the general citizenry to discuss these issues and develop responsive solutions.

A Practical Guide to Engaging Citizens in Government Performance and Community Conditions Reporting

The preceding case studies present two different models to engaging the public in performance measurement and reporting. Even though the two projects are located in different cities and have utilized different models to organize and engage the public in thinking about performance measures, some common lessons can be drawn from them for public and nonprofit managers and policy makers:

On Preparing for the Project Launch: Recommendations for Public and Nonprofit *Leaders*

1. Secure the support of the public sector leadership up front.

Whether a city decides to pursue the partnership model or the community indicators model, securing the support of the top leadership, such as the mayor, the city council, and the city manager, is important. As Robert Behn points out in a recent IBM report on Baltimore's CitiStat (Behn, 2007), these leaders' personal commitment and actions, such as participating in meetings and working with multiple stakeholders directly on the project, can convince government employees that this is for real and the results will matter in policy making for the community.

Elected officials' support is also critical to motivate departmental staff to collaborate and provide the necessary data support. For example, the city council of Des Moines purposively passed a council resolution to introduce the "Citizen-Initiated Performance Assessment" project to the city in order to signal to departmental staff that this project deserved their support. The mayor of Boston has also expressed strong support for the Boston Indicators Project when the Boston Foundation has released its biennial reports and a letter from the mayor has been included in each printed report. Since civic engagement is costly and time-consuming, it is natural and easy to pay lip service to the idea. Therefore, departmental officials and community participants must see top leadership's clear commitment to take the exercise seriously.

2. Help the top public sector leadership understand the risk up front.

Public or nonprofit managers should also help elected officials to understand and accept certain risks of engaging citizens in performance measurement and reporting. Sometimes performance data may reveal negative trends or even alarming problems. Hence, elected officials need to understand the risks up front and have the integrity and courage to withstand political pressure, allow the data to speak for itself, and believe that, in the long run, embracing the citizens' perspective in performance measurement will encourage departments to be more effective, responsive, and accountable to the public.

3. Understand the resource commitment up front.

It is necessary to have a strong resource commitment from the organizations involved in order to support citizen engagement in performance measurement. If the experimentation is done through the partnership model like the Des Moines CIPA project, the government is likely to bear significant administrative and financial responsibilities in collecting and analyzing data and coordinating activities. If the experimentation is done through a community indicators model like the Boston Indicators Project, the community will need a nonprofit organization or a community foundation that has a sufficient and sustainable base of resources to support the activities.

On Preparing for the Project Launch: Recommendations for Public and Nonprofit *Leaders*

1. Secure the support of the public sector leadership up front.
2. Help the top public sector leadership understand the risk up front.
3. Understand the resource commitment up front.
4. Think constantly about fund raising, grant writing, and financial partnerships with community and other organizations and agencies.

Resource commitments are not just in terms of financial investment, but also in terms of time and in-kind support. Such commitments include:

- Staff time designated to work with citizen groups
- Financial costs of organizing citizen meetings (e.g., facility costs, external facilitator's costs, food and beverage costs)
- Staff time and other administrative support to collect data and respond to citizens' requests for information
- Financial costs of surveys and other data collection activities
- Financial costs to upgrade computer equipment and software so that city departments or leading nonprofit organizations can respond to citizens' requests for information and data efficiently and effectively
- Financial costs to report performance results to the public

Based on the experiences of the Boston Indicators Project and the Des Moines CIPA project, the annual costs of the above activities can easily add up to between a quarter and a half million dollars. Hence, organizations need to think carefully about the resource commitment and implications. Otherwise, the project may not be sustainable in the long run.

4. Think constantly about fund raising, grant writing, and financial partnerships with community and other organizations and agencies.
Because of the significant financial commitment, it is necessary for the project organizers, whether they are government officials or community foundation staff, to constantly think about fund raising, sponsorship, grant writing, and partnership with organizations that can share the costs. For example, the Des Moines CIPA project received funding from the Sloan Foundation and also received a grant from the Fund for the City of New York to support its public performance reporting exercise. Similarly, the Boston Foundation partners with the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston to conduct the LaWare Leadership Forum.

Fund raising and grant writing not only are important to guarantee the long-term financial viability of the project, but also are necessary to demonstrate to the public that the project is valuable and significant enough to receive external funding and community investment. Hence, even if a government is willing to support the indicator or performance measurement project, government officials and community organizations should still continue to actively seek external funding.

On Soliciting Public Input: Recommendations for Public and Nonprofit *Project Managers*

1. Foster partnerships with a citizen group or an existing network of nonprofit organizations.
In either the partnership model or the community indicators model, it is easier to start the project by working with an existing citizen group or an established network of nonprofit organizations. There is no question that in the public meeting process, the organizer needs to expand the civic network and recruit new members continuously over time. However, by working with an existing group or network initially, project staff will be able to launch the engagement process more readily and get the buy-in from some sectors of the community immediately.

2. Use a portfolio approach in engaging the public.
As shown in the two case studies, there are different ways to solicit citizen input. Focus groups, committee meetings, and town hall meetings are the most common ways to engage citizens in dialogue and solicit ideas. However, physical meetings require a large time commitment and can be expensive, and business and community leaders may not be able to

commit to frequent meetings over a long period of time. These meetings are also not the most effective channels to solicit broad public input (Thomas, 1993). Therefore, government officials and program staff should explore other ways to engage the public and solicit their input. These may include:

- Citizen satisfaction surveys (by mail or phone)
- A simple response card system for program users
- Web-based discussion forums
- Web-based surveys

Also, it is not enough to invite citizens and community leaders to come to specific meetings organized by the government or a community foundation. The project team also needs to reach out and go to meetings and events organized by other organizations to let them know about the project and solicit public input through community partnerships. For example, the project team may go to:

- Neighborhood meetings
- Board meetings of business and nonprofit organizations
- Member meetings of nonprofit organizations
- School activities for parents and families
- University events for faculty members and students
- Community events and festivals
- Radio and TV programs by public radio and other local media

There is no single way to reach out to all strata of citizens and all communities within a city. Hence, it is important to develop a diversified portfolio approach that contains multiple strategies and venues to receive diverse and balanced input from citizens in all walks of life.

3. Balance different sectoral interests in the process.

It is very tempting for the project organizer to include in the project only established socioeconomic interests or citizens, or community representatives who already share a similar perspective on community issues. However, this will create a biased, exclusive framework in which to generate citizen-based performance measures that may fail to address certain community issues equitably (Mackintosh, 2000). Therefore, in organizing focus groups or citizen committees, the project organizer should think about who is represented and who is missing, and then recruit members for the underrepresented groups aggressively (Musso et al., 2006). For example, in convening various sector meetings, the Boston Foundation was very conscious about racial diversity and the need to balance the interests of various nonprofit groups in the community. In the Des Moines CIPA project, facilitators from Iowa State University also helped the performance team go through a brainstorming exercise to identify missing sectoral representatives in the CIPA process.

In addition, balancing the interests of different sectoral groups in public meetings can be a serious challenge. It is true that sometimes different organizational representatives may not work together well or may even refuse to go to the same meeting. In situations like this, the project organizer may try to organize different "working groups" for different sectoral interests to solicit their input separately and then integrate their perspectives and suggested performance measures in the final report to give a balanced perspective on program performance or community conditions.

On Soliciting Public Input: Recommendations for Public and Nonprofit *Project Managers*

1. Foster partnerships with a citizen group or an existing network of nonprofit organizations.
2. Use a portfolio approach in engaging the public.
3. Balance different sectoral interests in the process.
4. Have a neutral facilitator involved in the engagement process.
5. Focus on issues that citizens can relate to in their daily lives.
6. Think beyond departmental boundaries in listening to and addressing citizens' concerns.
7. Organize meetings with a clear agenda and timeline.
8. Recruit continuously.

4. Have a neutral facilitator involved in the engagement process.

When different stakeholders and community interests are involved in the engagement process, they inevitably bring their self-interest and individual perspectives. Hence, having a neutral facilitator or a convener from a local university or a nonprofit organization can be helpful to facilitate the exchange of ideas. The facilitator may also contribute to the success of a meeting by prompting more in-depth discussion of selected issues, helping participants focus on "facts" and "evidence" rather than on ideologies and beliefs, and managing the atmosphere of a meeting so that everyone feels comfortable enough to provide some input in the process (Baker, Addams, and Davis, 2005). A carefully facilitated discussion can also avoid divisive debates about policies and politics and help the participants focus on common interests and shared goals for the community.

5. Focus on issues that citizens can relate to in their daily lives.

In engaging citizens in thinking about "government performance" or "community conditions," the project organizer needs to understand that most ordinary citizens are not interested in the technical details or the cost-effectiveness measures of government operations. They view these issues as the responsibility of professional managers. Most citizens are interested in knowing how well the government has advanced the interests of a community—for example, whether the public sewer system is working well and can meet industry standards, how well roads are maintained, why certain segments of students are more likely to fail in the education system, and whether local residents feel safe in their neighborhoods. They expect the government to help fix these problems and they want to know what policy makers and government managers have done to deal with these challenges. So unlike performance measurement for government managers, performance measurement and reporting for citizens must address more quality-of-life issues that the general public can easily relate to.

6. Think beyond departmental boundaries in listening to and addressing citizens' concerns.

Citizens see quality-of-life issues or community conditions as multifaceted issues and expect intersectoral solutions, not the perspective of a single department or agency. As a result, they also expect inter-sectoral collaboration. For example, in one sectoral meeting about public safety for the 2006 Boston Indicators Report, citizen participants discussed the trends and challenges in addressing crime in Boston. During the discussion, they highlighted the interconnection between crime and many other socioeconomic, demographic, and policy factors, and emphasized the need for the police department to work with other government agencies and nonprofit organizations to resolve some of the fundamental issues that lead to crime.

This integrated kind of discussion was also evident in the Des Moines CIPA project. For example, in discussing the solutions for nuisance issues such as graffiti, abandoned housing, and illegal dumping, neighborhood representatives often expected coordinated efforts between county and city agencies, as well as between city agencies and utility companies, and between city agencies and neighborhood and nonprofit organizations, respectively.

Hence, the way citizens think about "performance" can be very different from the traditional view of "government performance." It is not just about the effort, output, and accomplishments of a single department, but also about how well each department works with other units of the government and other sectors to resolve community concerns and challenges.

7. Organize meetings with a clear agenda and timeline.

In organizing citizen meetings, it is very important to have a clearly defined "road map" for participants:

- How many meetings they are expected to join over what period of time
- How long each meeting will be
- What each meeting will try to accomplish
- When the end of the engagement process is anticipated
- What can be expected out of the engagement process

If the engagement process is stretched out over too long a period of time, the retention rate of participants will inevitably decline. It may be easier to get citizens' commitment to participate in a few intensive meetings rather than multiple meetings that are extended over a long period of time. Also, it is important to show participants at the beginning of the meetings why their input is needed and how their input will be used. Finally, providing food and beverages can help retain participants, especially if meetings are held close to mealtimes.

8. Recruit continuously.
Despite the best efforts to engage participants and facilitate all meetings, it is still inevitable that some participants will drop off because of various reasons—schedule conflicts, health reasons, change of jobs or residence, and different expectations of the project. Hence, it is important for the project organizer to recruit participants continuously if the engagement process is to continue for an extended period of time. Project organizers need to constantly ask existing participants to recommend who else should be at the table. They also need to pay attention to the changing conditions of the community and review who should be invited to represent the missing sectors. If a person is going to quit, the project organizer may ask the person to recommend a replacement. Only through diligent and continuous recruitment efforts can the engagement process be sustained over a long period of time.

On Reporting Performance Measurement Results and Community Conditions to Citizens: Recommendations for Public and Nonprofit *Project Managers*

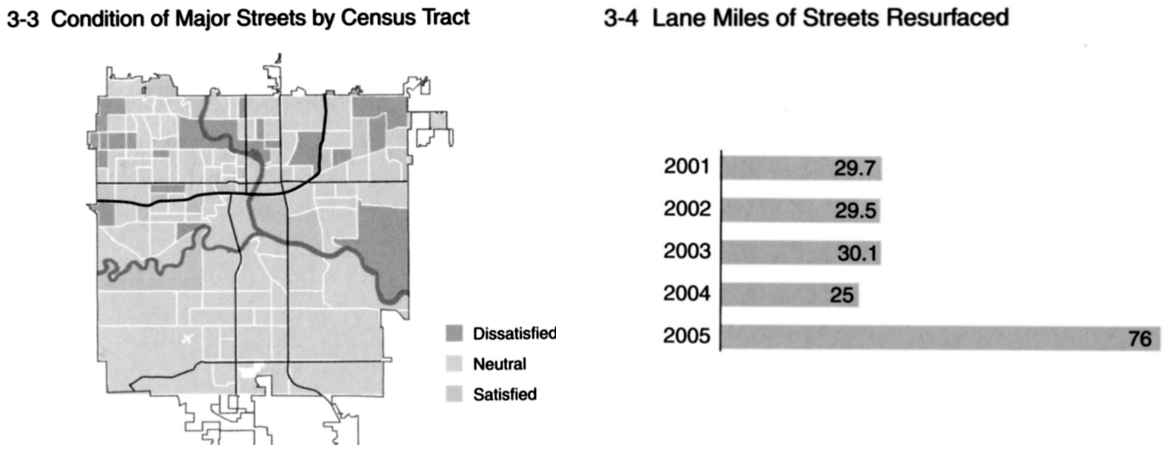
1. Focus on outcomes and intermediate outcome measures in public reporting.
Because citizens care mostly about issues that they can relate to, they are generally not interested in input measures or technical measures that analyze the operating process or even the output of government programs. Rather, they are interested in outcome and intermediate outcome measures: What are the socioeconomic conditions of our community? What are the results of a program? How has a program impacted the participants or the community? Are the service recipients or the general public satisfied with the results of the program?

This is not to say that citizens are totally disinterested in input or output measures that the traditional performance measurement emphasizes. For example, an analysis of the performance measures recommended by citizens in other Iowa cities that participated in the Citizen-Initiated Performance Assessment project shows that citizens are particularly interested in measures related to training programs for fire and emergency medical services (Ho and Coates, 2004). This is probably because most of the public may never need to use the services, but in the event they do, they are interested in knowing if the service-providing agency will have highly qualified personnel to do the job. Also, many citizens are interested in knowing what training programs government officials, especially police officers and emergency response officials, receive about customer service and professional interaction with the public (input measures) and how satisfied the people who have had interactions with these officials are when they use these services (process measures). However, generally speaking, citizens are still primarily interested in outcome and intermediate outcomes of public programs and policies.

2. Make the design of public performance reports citizen-friendly.
Not only do citizens differ in their interest in the content of performance reports, but they also prefer a different reporting format from professional managers (Heggeness, Buschmann, and Walkington, 2004). In general, simple graphs and charts, rather than pages full of numbers, are much better for public consumption (Baker, Addams, and Davis, 2005). For example, in the Des Moines performance report for citizens, nice graphics are used to show data trends and patterns (see Figure 4).

3. Provide geographic segregation of data.
Citizens are interested in geographical segregation of data. In the Des Moines CIPA project, for example, many citizens expressed dissatisfaction with citywide performance measures because they could not relate well to the information. They wanted the performance information, such as the city's response time to emergency calls or nuisance complaints, broken down by wards or neighborhoods. Similarly, citizens and community organization representatives in Boston want indicators at the neighborhood level so that they can do their own analysis and planning for community actions. Hence, the Boston Indicators Project website has a special feature known as

Figure 4: Use of Graphics in Performance Reports



Source: *Figures 3-3 and 3-4 in the Des Moines 2005 report, p. 19.*

"Geography-at-a-Glance," which highlights some of the key socioeconomic indicators by neighborhoods (see Figure 5 on page 36), and the MetroBoston DataCommon enables data mapping by census tract when feasible.

4. Provide comparable performance benchmarks.

In both the Des Moines and the Boston Indicators projects, citizens and community leaders have expressed strong interest in seeing a comparison of their local communities with other equivalent communities. As a result, the Boston Indicators Project shows many indicators that compare the economic performance and social changes within the Greater Boston area as well as with other major metropolitan areas. In the Des Moines performance report, the city compares its performance indicators with indicators from neighboring cities in the Des Moines metropolitan area as well as with other cities in the nation. All these efforts give an interesting comparative perspective and may help citizens contextualize performance information as part of a particular national trend or a statewide environment.

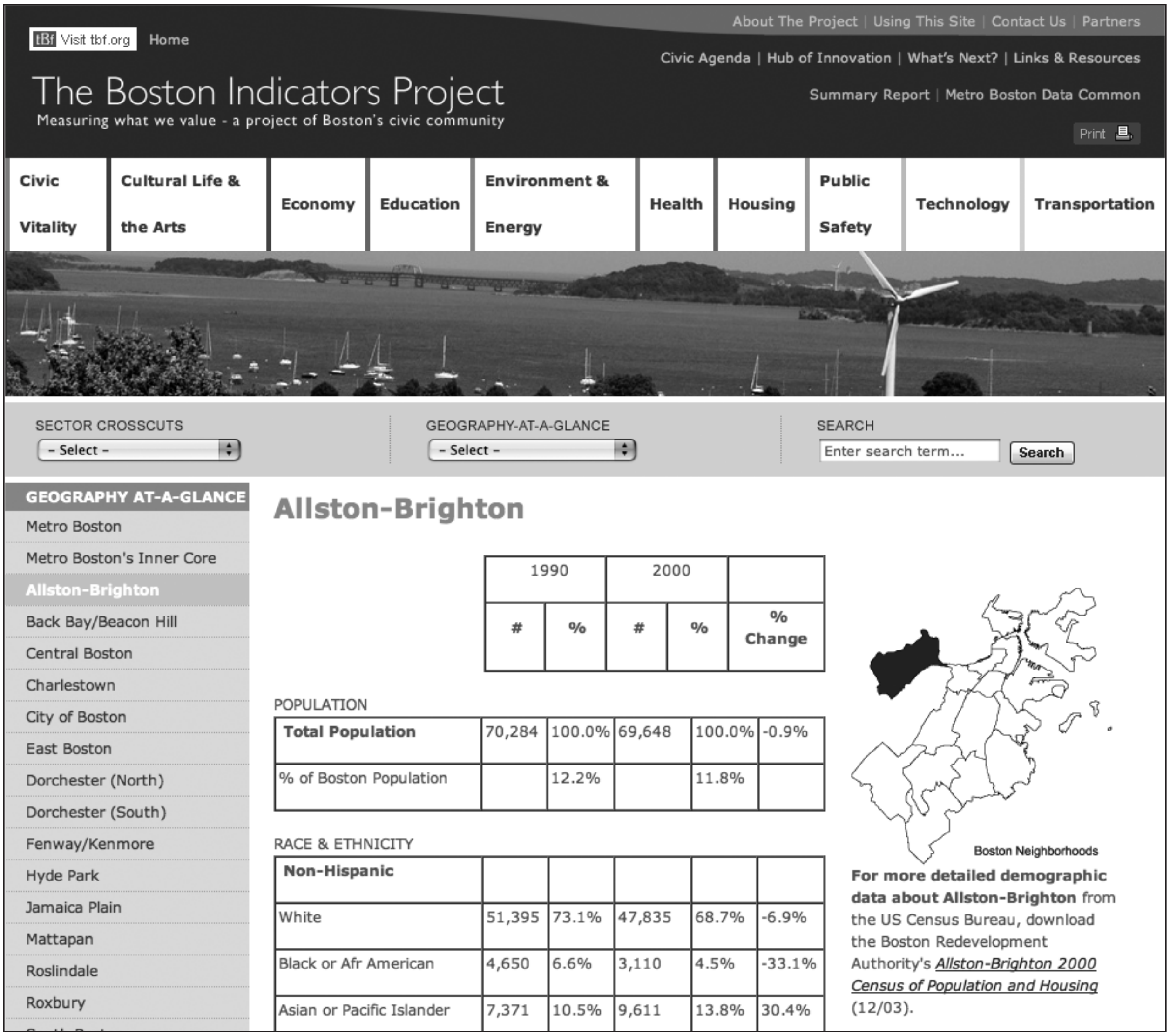
5. Provide stories to explain and elaborate the data.

Furthermore, citizens want qualitative description of performance, not just quantitative measures. They want stories that they can relate to. They also want to see successful and innovative practices, not just failures and problems. For example, in the Boston Indicators Reports and its website, the Boston Foundation provides discussion about new programs and efforts by the government and nonprofit sectors to deal with various quality-of-life issues. It also has a special section on "accomplishments and innovations" and a "hub of innovation" for each sector to highlight and describe some of the successful and innovative programs in Boston.

On Reporting Performance Measurement Results and Community Conditions to Citizens: Recommendations for Public and Nonprofit *Project Managers*

1. Focus on outcomes and intermediate outcome measures in public reporting.
2. Make the design of public performance reports citizen-friendly.
3. Provide geographic segregation of data.
4. Provide comparable performance benchmarks.
5. Provide stories to explain and elaborate the data.
6. Organize performance information by community concerns, not by departmental or agency structure.
7. Use web-based reporting to keep citizens more informed.
8. Blend e-reporting and paper copies.
9. Guarantee data accuracy and reliability.

Figure 5: "Geography-at-a-Glance" from the Boston Indicators Project Website



Source: *http://www.bostonindicators.org/IndicatorsProject/GeographyAtAGlance/Default.aspx?id=2310*

Citizens' interest in stories and accomplishments is understandable. After all, it is their community that the performance report writes about, and so they do not want to see only negative coverage. Appealing qualitative analysis and storytelling are as important as the scientific, quantitative analysis of data. This is another area that may surprise many professional managers who have been engaged in traditional performance measurement and reporting.

6. Organize performance information by community concerns, not by departmental or agency structure.

Citizens often view many policy challenges as inter-sectoral issues that cut across the organizational boundary of government agencies. Hence, a community indicators report or a citizen performance report should reflect that and focus on and be organized by topics that citizens are most concerned about. This is especially important for public managers to understand since it is very easy for them to simply organize their performance report by departmental structure rather than issues.

The Des Moines 2005 performance report shows an example of how information and performance measures from different departments can be brought together on a policy issue. The "code enforcement" section of the report draws data from the planning and zoning department, public works, and the police. Similarly, its section on the city's "cleanliness" brings in performance data on garbage and recycling, storm sewers, street sweeping, junk and debris cleanup, sanitary sewers, snow removal, junk-car towing, and graffiti removal.

7. Use web-based reporting to keep citizens more informed.

In addition to traditional paper reports, project organizers should use the Internet more aggressively. The Boston Indicators Project website is a good example of how data, analysis, and stories can be integrated on a performance reporting website. Research has shown that effective e-government strategies can improve the public perception of government responsiveness and trust, especially at the local government level (Tolbert and Mossberger, 2006).

Another advantage of web-based reporting is that it can be updated regularly and cost-effectively. In addition, the webpage can provide many dynamic links and direct users to different sections of the website to get more detailed information on selected topics. For example, the website of the Boston Indicators Report provides five "crosscutting filters" that draw measures from across the 10 quality-of-life sectors in the following areas: children and youth, Boston neighborhoods, race and ethnicity, sustainable development, and competitive edge. These crosscutting filters can be expanded and revised easily, allowing for and encouraging more holistic thinking across the "silos" of the original 10 sectors.

Web-based reporting also allows more active reading of the report. For example, users can provide feedback, answer an online survey, download data and information that they are most interested in, and forward information to their peers. In a 2004 IBM report, Lee also recommends the following strategies of e-reporting to engage citizens more effectively (Lee, 2004):

- Create an e-mail listserv to inform citizens of any update of the report
- Create special information kits for different age groups
- Create opportunities for citizens to sign up for volunteer opportunities
- Make the text of the online report searchable on the Internet
- Archive e-reports from previous years
- Make it easy for users to share the e-report with others by having an "e-mail this article" function

8. Blend e-reporting and paper copies.

Despite the benefits and growing significance of e-reporting, paper copies of a performance or community indicators report are still indispensable. It is very important to hand out hard copies of the report in citizen meetings and other venues of public engagement so that the participants can immediately see some of the findings in front of them. Also, paper reporting and e-reporting are complementary to one another, as paper reports can provide the "marketing lead" for web traffic to the e-reporting site.

Hence, it is not an "either or" choice between e-reports and paper reports. What is important is how to structure a paper reporting strategy so that it can lead people to the website later. Here are some recommendations for project managers based on the experiences of the Boston Indicators Project:

- Use paper reports to provide only a summary of the key findings and highlight the most important issues.
- Use paper reports to attract the public's attention by showing nice graphics and reporting interesting stories and case studies, and then directing the readers to the website to get more detailed information and analysis.
- Highlight the web address of the e-reporting site in multiple places in the paper report.
- Put a picture of the website homepage in the front section of the paper report.
- Make sure that the website address highlighted in the paper reports does not change over time.

9. Guarantee data accuracy and reliability.

It is important to establish the trust and credibility of the public engagement process as well as the accuracy and integrity of the data used in the process (Walters, Aydelotte, and Miller, 2000). Government officials, whether they are involved as co-leaders in the partnership model or as invited participants in the community indicators model, have to be responsive to requests for information in a reasonable, timely, and thorough manner, even

The Key National Indicators Initiative

The "Key National Indicators" Initiative is a collective effort initiated by the U.S. Government Accountability Office, the National Academies, and other national organizations to develop a generally accepted, comprehensive indicators system for the entire U.S. across various areas, including communications, community, crime, diversity, ecology, education, governance, health, the macro-economy, security, social support, socioeconomic mobility, sustainability, and transparency. The purpose of the system is to inform policy makers and the general citizenry about the overall status and progress of the United States in various areas, foster public dialogue on strategic issues, and enhance accountability. The national indicators will be largely built upon the foundation of official federal government statistics and administrative records. However, state and local data as well as private and nonprofit sources of data and fact-based assessment can also be included (U.S. GAO, 2003). The project is still in its early planning phase, but as of spring 2007, the Key National Indicators Project has become an independent nonprofit entity and will provide its own website about "the state of the USA" in the near future.

if the data may not look favorable to the administration. Only through an honest dialogue with solid data and analysis as the foundation can trust between community representatives and government officials be built, and only with trust can multi-sectoral partnerships be developed to resolve community problems and policy challenges.

It is also advisable for the project organizer, whether government or nonprofit, to use multiple sources of data and build a broad data partnership to support the measurement project. These sources may include:

- Statistics from national sources, such as the Bureau of Census or the Bureau of Economic Analysis
- Research findings by researchers at national nonprofit organizations and foundations
- Research findings by local university researchers
- Administrative data from other units of government in the region

There is a gradual movement in the United States—the Key National Indicators Initiative being one example—to support this kind of data partnership between government agencies and nonprofit organizations (see "The Key National Indicators Initiative"). As such movements continue to expand, local community leaders, government managers, and citizens will have more valid and reliable sources of data to help them think about the effectiveness of public policies and the well-being of their communities.

Finally, to further ensure public confidence in the performance report, government officials may also conduct performance audits to certify the accuracy and validity of the data presented in their performance reports. In some countries, such as the United Kingdom and Canada, government performance reports are prepared by auditors partly for this reason. In the United States, performance measurement and reporting has been regarded as an internal management function for many decades and, as a result, auditors' participation in the exercise has been minimal. However, this trend may change in the future as the auditing community has begun to show greater interest in performance measurement and auditing in recent years (GASB, 2003).

On Follow-Up Actions to Government Performance and Community Conditions Reporting: Recommendations for Public and Nonprofit *Managers*

1. Think beyond performance reporting; civic engagement is critical.

As Mary Jo Meisner, vice president of the Boston Foundation, points out, "If you don't get the Indicators Project findings out, then the report will simply sit on the shelf." That is why the Boston Indicators Project has a civic agenda and why the Boston Foundation organizes the "What's Next? Seminars" and the John LaWare Forum. Through these activities, the Boston Foundation engages different community leaders and the media to think about the issues raised by the Indicators Project and encourage them to develop concrete actions and collaborative partnerships to foster change.

On Follow-Up Actions to Government Performance and Community Conditions Reporting: Recommendations for Public and Nonprofit *Managers*

1. Think beyond performance reporting; civic engagement is critical.
2. Think carefully about the role of policy advocacy.
3. Do not forget about internal performance management and cost-efficiency.

These intentional efforts serve several other purposes:

- They raise political awareness about the findings among policy makers and community leaders, who will then take the report more seriously.
- They create a network of community and business leaders who may influence the policy-making process of government.
- They create opportunities for policy makers, government officials, and members of different organizations and socioeconomic sectors to have open dialogues and information exchanges that can potentially mitigate some of the political and ideological barriers to policy change.
- They foster the development of formal and informal networks of business and community leaders and encourage them to find opportunities to pool resources together to enhance the public good.

As David Luberoff, the executive director of the Rapport Institute for Greater Boston at Harvard University and one of the participants of the Boston Indicators Project since 2004, remarks, "The meeting process of the [Boston Indicators Project] offers an opportunity for a lot of people to catch up with the latest developments in the community.… Both the conversations that actually happen in the meetings and [discussions] before or after the meetings are incredibly valuable.…"

An example of how this might lead to positive policy and community action is the steps taken to reduce the incidence of crime among young women as a result of the Boston Indicators Project. In the meetings and the public report of the 2004 Boston Indicators Project, the increase in young women's involvement in crime was one of the critical issues raised. As a result of the increased awareness of this issue, a number of city programs and nonprofit initiatives were launched to assist these women and to try to reverse the trend. John McDevitt, associate dean for research and graduate studies in the College of Criminal Justice at Northeastern University, remarks that the Boston Indicators Project played an important role in generating this outcome by legitimizing the concerns that many shared, fostering a consensus among some of the key stakeholders, and, as a result, empowering them to take responsive action. Many other participants in the Boston Indicators Project and the John LaWare Leadership Forum also made similar remarks, suggesting that the data and civic engagement effort by the Boston Foundation has increased the cohesion of the policy community, heightened their awareness of certain policy issues, and sown the seeds for positive policy action.

2. Think carefully about the role of policy advocacy.

It is important to remember that citizen engagement in performance measurement or community conditions reporting should focus on the "facts" and data to create evidence-based civic dialogue in the community. It is not and should not be designed to replace the role of the city council or elected body, which is tasked with crafting policies and solutions to resolve community problems.

In other words, there is a fine line between civic engagement and policy advocacy, and it is important for the project organizer, whether public or nonprofit, to think about how the two spheres of activity should be separated but linked in a particular political context. One important strategy to achieve this balance is to work with nonprofit organizations in the community and let them use the data and take up the advocacy roles voluntarily. In this way, the project organizer can maintain its neutrality and at the same time empower a healthy, informed dialogue of policy issues.

3. Do not forget about internal performance management and cost-efficiency.

Finally, public managers need to understand that civic engagement in performance measurement and reporting cannot replace internal performance management efforts. As a report by the Community Indicators Consortium (2007) points out, community conditions reporting, either by a community indicators project or by a government, is likely to focus on broad policy goals and quality-of-life issues. However, reporting the conditions by itself is insufficient to lead to policy actions or program solutions. Policy makers, public managers, and nonprofit leaders still need to use the information to do follow-up work and deliver more effective and innovative programs to "move the dials" of the indicators.

This is where performance management is needed. Program managers and staff within a government agency or a nonprofit organization still need to develop cost-efficiency and effectiveness performance measurement for managerial purposes. They may also adopt various tools, such as the balanced scorecard, Six Sigma, or customer value management, to help employees focus more on program results and cut waste and ensure that resources are put to best use to address community concerns (Bertels, 2003; Kaplan and Norton, 2004; Osborne and Hutchinson, 2004).

Hence, civic engagement should be viewed as a complement to, rather than as a substitute for, the efforts of government agencies in performance management. In fact, civic engagement is likely to make traditional performance management even more relevant and important because public managers will be able to integrate citizen input into their planning and measurement exercises. Because citizen engagement is also likely to create greater pressure to perform, performance management may become even more significant for departmental and elected officials.

Conclusion

This paper discusses two different models to engaging citizens in measuring the performance of government programs and policies, and uses the case studies of Des Moines and Boston to illustrate how these can be carried out. The community indicators model, as illustrated by the Boston Indicators Project, is usually driven by community organizations that focus on quality-of-life issues and the overall socioeconomic, civic health, and environmental conditions of a community. The partnership model, as demonstrated by the Des Moines Citizen-Initiated Performance Assessment project, adopts a slightly different philosophy by emphasizing an equal partnership between government and citizen representatives or community organizations.

Despite these differences, both models try to incorporate citizens' perspectives and priorities in selecting and developing indicators. Also, both emphasize the importance of building partnerships

The Istanbul Declaration

From June 27 to June 30, 2007, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) hosted a world forum on "measuring the progress of societies," in which various government and community leaders from more than 30 countries discussed how to use statistics and community indicators to assist policy making, guide socioeconomic development planning, and hold government more accountable for results.

At the conference in Istanbul, representatives from the European Commission, the OECD, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the United Nations, the United Nations Development Program, and the World Bank made a joint declaration that "evidence-based decision making has to be promoted at all levels to increase the welfare of societies." In the declaration, these organizations encourage governments all over the world to:

- Urge statistical offices, public and private organizations, and academic experts to work alongside representatives of their communities to produce high-quality, fact-based information that can be used by all of society to form a shared view of societal well-being and its evolution over time.
- Invest resources to develop reliable data and indicators according to the "Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics" adopted by the United Nations in 1994.
- Build the necessary statistical capacity, especially in developing countries, to improve the availability of data and indicators needed to guide development programs and report on progress toward international goals, such as the Millennium Development Goals.
- Share best practices on the measurement of societal progress using sound and reliable methodologies.
- Stimulate international debate, based on solid statistical data and indicators, on both global issues of societal progress and comparisons of such progress.
- Invite both public and private organizations to contribute to this effort and create initiatives at the local, regional, national, and international levels.

and collaborative networks with non-government entities to resolve policy challenges and acknowledge that effective public communication and civic engagement are critical to performance measurement and community conditions reporting.

At the turn of the 21st century, more government leaders in the world have recognized the importance of and necessity for performance measurement of government programs and policies (see "The Istanbul Declaration" on page 41). By documenting both successes and failures publicly, government performance and community conditions reporting can motivate public managers and policy makers to continue to seek improvement and think more strategically about result accomplishments. In the long run, these efforts may help rebuild public trust in the government (Berman, 1997).

However, many have also realized that this exercise has to go beyond traditional managerial concerns, such as cost efficiency and output measurement. The shift to "outcome-oriented" or "results-oriented" measurement at the end of the 20th century was a critical and encouraging shift. However, it is also time to ask the following questions: Outcomes for whom? Who has the rights to determine how performance is defined and measured?

This report challenges policy makers and program managers to think about these questions more openly by presenting two models of public engagement in government performance and community conditions reporting. It is hoped that through wider public participation, the performance measurement exercise within and outside the government will eventually become a more effective mechanism to hold the government accountable to the public.

Acknowledgments

The author would like to thank numerous government and community leaders in Des Moines, Iowa, and Boston, Massachusetts, who were willing to participate in interviews and surveys to support this study. Becky Morelock, the past president of Des Moines Neighbors, and Charlotte Kahn, director of the Boston Indicators Project, deserve special thanks for providing invaluable insights about their projects and tremendous assistance during my research of the two case studies. The leadership and staff at the Boston Foundation were also very generous and supportive during my on-site participation in some of their community meetings.

The author is also grateful to Paul Coates, director of the State and Local Government Extensions Program at Iowa State University (ISU), and his staff for their support and hard work in the Iowa Citizen-Initiated Performance Assessment project in 2001–2004, when the author was an assistant professor at ISU. Having been a practitioner and a community leader as well as an academic, Coates is a truly visionary leader who provided essential and practical advice to the project as its co-director with the author in 2001–2004. He remains a wonderful colleague and mentor.

Finally, the author would like to thank Mark Abramson, Jonathan Breul, and John Kamensky of the IBM Center for The Business of Government for their generous support and advice during the preparation of this report. Special thanks is owed to Mark Abramson, who patiently reviewed several drafts with the author and provided extremely helpful advice on how to refine the focus, structure, and writing of the manuscript.

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